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PLANETARY PHENOMENA FOR MAY AND JUNE, 1915.

By Malcolm McNeill.

PHASES OF THE MOON, PACIFIC TIME.

Last Quarter ..	May 5,	$9^{h}\ 23^{m}$ P.M.	Last Quarter ..	June 4,	$8^{h}\ 32^{m}$ A.M.
New Moon	" 13,	7 31 P.M.	New Moon ...	" 12,	10 57 A.M.
First Quarter ..	" 21,	8 50 P.M.	First Quarter.	" 20,	6 24 A.M.
Full Moon	" 28,	1 33 P.M.	Full Moon	" 26,	8 27 P.M.

The Sun reaches the summer solstice and summer begins on June 22d, about 4 A. M. Pacific time.

The present two-months period affords the best opportunity of the year for observation of *Mercury* as an evening star. It passes superior conjunction with the Sun on the morning of May 1st and the apparent distance of the bodies rapidly increases, so the planet remains above the horizon more than an hour after sunset some time before the middle of the month. Greatest east-elongation 23° 18′ is reached on May 31st, and the planet then remains above the horizon nearly two hours after sunset. The planet and the Sun then begin to approach each other, but the interval between their times of setting does not lessen to an hour until about the middle of the month. After this the two bodies approach each other rapidly and come to conjunction on June 26th. There will therefore be a month or more in which the planet can be seen in the evening twilight. This is rather a long time for visibility. The greatest elongation, 23° 18′, is only an average one; but during May the planet is some degrees north of the Sun, thus retarding the setting of the planet. This condition is reversed in June, and the planet is somewhat south of the Sun, making a tendency toward an earlier setting; but the real distance of the planet from the Sun increases until June 20th, when aphelion is reached. This causes a less than average diminution of the apparent distance between the bodies after greatest elongation and retards the setting of the planet. Near the time of greatest elongation *Mercury* remains above the horizon long enuf so that twilight fades sufficiently to allow the brighter stars near the planet to be seen. The planet moves eastward thru the constellation *Taurus* and *Gemini*. Shortly after the first of May it is about 5° south of the *Pleiades*. On May 16th it is about 7° north of *Aldebaran, α Tauri,* the brightest star in the constellation. By June 1st it is on the border line between *Gemini* and *Taurus*. At the time when it ceases to be easily seen it is south and west (not far from vertically below, as seen near setting) of *Castor* and *Pollux* about 10°. On May 31st it passes conjunction with *Saturn*, the latter planet being 2° 29′ south.

Venus is a morning star, with gradually diminishing apparent distance from the Sun and diminishing brightness, altho it is still the brightest of the planets. Thruout the two-months period it rises about an hour and twenty minutes before sunrise, the interval not varying more than five minutes. It moves from the constellation *Pisces* thru *Aries* into *Taurus,* and on June 23d it will pass about 4° north of *Aldebaran, α Tauri.*

Mars is gradually drawing far enuf away from the Sun to be easily seen in the morning twilight. On May 1st it rises a little more than an hour before sunrise and on June 30th the interval has increased to about two and a half hours. During this time it moves 44° eastward and 15° northward from *Pisces* thru *Aries* into *Taurus,* reaching on June 30th a point about 5° south of the *Pleiades*. On the morning of May 14th it is in conjunction with *Venus,* the latter planet being about 1° south. *Mars* is still lessening its distance from the Earth, being at the end of June sixteen millions miles nearer us than it was on May 1st, and its brightness increases 10 per cent during the period, so that it is now about as bright as an average first-magnitude star.

Jupiter's apparent distance from the Sun is still increasing. On May 1st it rises about two hours before sunrise, and on June 30th it rises a little before midnight. It is in the constellation *Pisces,* moving about 8° eastward and 3° northward. At the end of June it is about 1° west and 2° south of the vernal equinoctial point, but will begin its retrograde motion before it reaches the equinox.

Saturn is in good position for evening observation during May, but is drawing nearer to the Sun and comes to conjunction on June 28th. On May 1st it sets nearly four hours after sunset; this diminishes to two hours before June 1st and becomes zero before the end of the month. It is in the western part of *Gemini* and moves about 8° eastward during the two months. On June 1st it is about half way between *Aldebaran* and *Castor* and *Pollux*. The rings retain their apparent opening, the minor axis being about 45 per cent of the major.

Uranus rises shortly before 2 A. M. on May 1st and shortly before 10 P. M. on June 30th. It is therefore getting far enuf away from the Sun to be seen on a clear moonless night, but unfortunately there is no bright star near. It is nearly stationary in the constellation *Capricorn,* moving about half a degree westward during June. There is a fourth-magnitude star, ι *Capricorni,* about 1° east during May and the distance between planet and star increases about one half during June.

Neptune is in the western sky in the evening, setting shortly before 9 P. M. on June 30th. It moves about 2° eastward in the constellation *Cancer.*

(EIGHTY-FIFTH) AWARD OF THE DONOHOE COMET-MEDAL.

The Comet-Medal of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific has been awarded in duplicate to Mr. LEON CAMPBELL, Assistant in-Charge of the Arequipa Station of the Harvard Observatory, in Peru, for the discovery of an unexpected comet on the morning of September 18, 1914; and to Mr. CHARLES JAMES WESTLAND, Christchurch, New Zealand, for the discovery of the same comet a few hours later.

Committee on Comet-Medal:

W. W. CAMPBELL,
R. H. TUCKER,
HEBER D. CURTIS.

NOTE.—The unusual difficulties in sending cable messages, arising from the world-wide war, prevented prompt announcements of the discovery of this comet to the observatories on other continents.

Mr. Campbell announced his discovery by cable promptly to Harvard College Observatory, the message was duly received, and the usual Harvard circular of information was issued on September 19th, but it was not practicable and probably not possible to inform European astronomers by cable thru the medium of the distribution bureau at Kiel, Germany. Mr. CAMPBELL discovered the comet at Greenwich mean time September $17^d.74$, and his first photograph of the comet was made at date September $17^d.80$.

Mr. WESTLAND'S discovery was made at Gr. M. T. September $17^d.99$, and he at once secured a photograph of the comet, which recorded a tail 10° in length. He promptly announced the discovery by telegraph to Mr. C. E. ADAMS, Government Astronomer, Wellington, New Zealand. Mr. Adams endeavored to cable to the Lick Observatory, but found that the British cable from New Zealand to British Columbia had been cut by an enemy's warship; whereupon he cabled the information to the Government Astronomer, Melbourne, Australia.

The comet was independently discovered by Dr. JOSEPH LUNT of the Royal Observatory, Cape of Good Hope. Dr. LUNT first saw the object at Gr. M. T. September $18^d.42$, but concluded that it was a nebula. The following night was cloudy. He first recognized that the object was a comet at Gr. M. T. September $20^d.27$, and the announcement of the discovery was cabled to London on September 21st. The Cape of Good Hope announcement was the first one to reach Great Britain.

The comet was also discovered independently by Mr. G. V. HUDSON, Wellington, New Zealand, and by Mr. A. BOALT, Napier, New Zealand, at Gr. M. T. September $18^d.90$.

All of the discoveries were made by naked eye, and it is probable that the object was discovered independently by still other observers.

The Comet-Medal Committee desires to record that each case of independent discovery by two or more observers must be considered on the basis of attending circumstances, and that the award described above is in no sense to be considered as establishing a precedent for future awards.

THE COMMITTEE.